

2008

SportsUnited

U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

SportsUnited is a sports programming initiative designed to start a dialogue at the grass roots level with non-elite youth. Our exchanges aid participants in discovering how success in athletics can translate into the development of life skills and achievement in the classroom, while sending a message of international understanding, cultural tolerance and mutual respect.

<http://exchanges.state.gov/intlathletics/>

AFGHANISTAN

Girls Learn Lessons of Life and Basketball

With the help of former WNBA player Kym Hampton and former NBA player Gheorghe Muresan, seven young female Afghan basketball players and their five coaches got to learn basketball fundamentals and drills that they took home to their teams in Afghanistan. ECA brought the delegation, ages 14 to 19, and two of their coaches to the Washington D.C. area for a two-week basketball program. The girls had the amazing opportunity to watch and participate in a wheelchair basketball game and to visit area high schools, where they shared basketball techniques and favorite stories of home with American students. Throughout the program the participants also learned about Title IX, sports health and the importance of playing as a team and being leaders in their communities.



PANAMA & NICARAGUA

Back-to-Back Home Runs for SportsUnited

From April 21 to May 7, 2008 ECA teamed up with the Department of Defense and Major League Baseball for a South American baseball program that reached over 7,600 young players and coaches. The Southern Command Baseball Team joined former MLB pitcher Elias Sosa in leading clinics and playing in exhibition games across Panama and Nicaragua. Throughout the tour the message was clear, as Sosa consistently emphasized: "The focus of the program is on youth, with the goal of improving their communities, making them better citizens and helping them improve their own country."



"I will share every experience with my friends. I will tell them how I met youth who proved they can overcome obstacles...and social problems in society. I will tell them in every society there is a process working within society to improve the current conditions."

Afghan participant



MOROCCO

Youth Win with Soccer Envoys

Lorie Fair, a former U.S. Women's National Team player and Olympian, joined Jay Miller, a top U.S. youth soccer coach, in Morocco as Sports Envoys of ECA and U.S. Soccer from March 31 to April 4, 2008. The program gathered youth ages 14 to 17 from across the country for a residential soccer camp. In addition to soccer, the participants also learned about good citizenship, good health practices and sportsmanship. Nawal El Moutawakel, the Moroccan Minister for Youth and Sport joined the group for the program's opening ceremonies. Ms. Moutawakel is the first woman from the African continent to win an Olympic gold medal.

IRAN

Diplomacy & Sport: Together in the Weight Room

A 12-member delegation of Iranian weightlifters from Iran's Junior National Team were hosted on a joint State Department/USOC program at the U.S. Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado. From April 26 through May 8, 2008 the Iranians lived and trained at the Olympic Training Center alongside the American athletes and benefited from the state-of-the-art facilities prior to competition in the Junior Olympics in Colombia. In addition to their labors in the gym, the Iranian delegation also attended an NBA playoff game between the Denver Nuggets and the Los Angeles Lakers, as guests of the NBA.